



# GUIDELINES ON INFLUENZA TESTING

## ERMC, 2005-2006

### I. Test Types and Characteristics

- a. Rapid testing for influenza has fair sensitivity and good specificity
- b. It does not differentiate A from B
- c. This will only be available as a STAT test.
- d. LRMC also performs viral culture and PCR tests for influenza as well as providing samples to national survey centers. These tests are less useful clinically due to a slower turn-around time, but are valuable epidemiologic tools in defining rates of influenza within the community. All rapid antigen positive results will be relaxed to order a viral respiratory culture.

### II. Reasons to Test

- a. Establishing a diagnosis for a patient allows for specific antiviral treatment and prevents unneeded antibiotic administration.
- b. Samples obtained provide information on community rates of influenza and are used to construct the following year's vaccine.

### III. Who should be tested?

- a. In general, patients to be tested are those for whom treatment would be considered.
- b. When available, testing should be obtained before prescribing antiviral medications.
- c. Patients presenting with all of the below should be tested:
  - i. Fever and cough
  - ii. Present <48 hours after symptom onset
  - iii. Influenza known to be circulating in the community (December-March)

### IV. How to obtain a sample

#### a. Preferred sample-Nasal Wash in adults (nasal aspirate in adolescents)

- i. Tilt head back with sterile cup just below nose
- ii. Have patient make continuous "k-k-k" sound to avoid swallowing
- iii. 5 cc sterile saline bulb squirted into nose
- iv. Move head upright and allow saline to run into sterile specimen cup
- v. Transport to lab as soon as possible

#### b. Nasal aspirate (children)-use Acquire NP Wash Kit (child) if available and follow instructions. If not available, bulb syringe or aspiration bulb may be used:

- i. Break open 5 cc saline bulb and withdraw 2.5 cc
- ii. Tilt head back and instill into one nostril, then aspirate back into bulb
- iii. Transfer to sterile specimen cup
- iv. Repeat for other nostril
- v. Transport to lab as soon as possible

#### c. Nasal Wash (less sensitive)

- i. Rayon swab inserted into nose
- ii. Placed in Viral transport medium
- iii. Note that pertussis testing requires use of Dacron swab only